

New forms of governance in Flemish cities: results of an exploratory study

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Problem statement and research questions

In this paper, we focus on local governance arrangements in Flemish cities. More specific, we address the question how and to what extent the emerging trend of local governance influences the way in which local governments function, and how it affects relationships between governmental actors (e.g. politicians and civil servants). The assumption is that local governments are not fully equipped any longer to deal alone with complex and wicked societal issues (like sustainability, intercultural society, growing inequalities etc.) (Blomgren-Hansen et al. 2008; Comfort 1999; Van Bueren et al. 2003). Especially in a local context, governments struggle with capacity-problems to govern effectively (Kazepof 2004; Musterd & Murie 2010). This decreased capacity relates to (1) the multi-dimensionality of the challenges (poverty is a problem with many dimensions e.g.), (2) the pressure on the public finances, and (3) the decreasing confidence in government as a policy-maker who, alone and from a top-down perspective, develops and implements policies (Kickert 2012; Peters & Pierre 1998). In this context, we observe the emergence of 'local governance arrangements' of actors at the local level, who, in a governance arrangement (Emerson et al. 2011) try to address those wicked issues, inspired by the belief that cooperation between many actors (public, non-profit, for-profit) is essential to come to effective answers (De Rynck et al. 2003; Hartz-Karp & Meister 2010; Pemberton 2013, van de Wijdeven et al. 2007; Hendriks 2012). This paper is the result of a small-scale and exploratory research project towards this trend of new governance arrangements. We want to address two questions:

- Can we observe these arrangements in Flemish cities? And how can these arrangements be systematized, and along which variables?
- What is the effect of this trend on the structuring and functioning of local government itself, and more specific on the actors, their roles, and their relationship (politicians and civil servants e.g.)?

In the reminder of this paper we first present the research method, and the empirical results on two levels (inventory of local governance arrangements, and results of our multiple case study). We conclude with a discussion.

Methodology

We present the preliminary results of an exploratory case study into local governance arrangements in Flemish cities. We define, for our purposes, a local governance arrangement as the '*multiplicity of societal actors (like citizens, groups of citizens, associations, companies, governments or*

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governmental actors) which, in varying compositions, join together to address relevant societal issues and challenges’. This is a very broad definition that should enable us to identify as many as possible local governance arrangements’ in the Flemish cities. These local governance arrangements or local governance arrangements have following characteristics:

- A network of actors (who is involved?)
- Organized around one or more concrete societal issues/challenges (about what?)
- That are relevant for (the policy of) local government (public responsibility or societal relevance)

Within this definition, of course a lot of variation or heterogeneity is possible, for example concerning the policy field or policy themes addressed, the concrete actions or goals one is concerned about, the kind of, and number of, actors involved etcetera.

For our first research goal, the identification and inventory local governance arrangements in Flemish cities, we have asked the cities (more specific their representatives in the steering committee of our research project) to identify some relevant cases in their city. For this exercise, the cities had two rather straightforward handles: our broad definition of what we call ‘local governance arrangements’, and a template for describing the cases on the basis of the relevant variables: city, name of the coalition, policy domain, roles and goals of the coalition, and (number of) actors involved. Based on this informed, the research team has clustered the identified local governance arrangements (N=61) based on these variables (qualitative cluster analysis). The aim of this analysis was to detect, at a very general level of abstraction, the variation among local governance arrangements in Flemish cities. The list of local governance arrangements identified can be found in annex (in Dutch).

In a second step we performed a case study, for which we selected 5 cases of local governance arrangements. A short description of these cases can be found in annex. For each case, we conducted approx. 2-4 interviews with representatives of (public and private) partner-organizations in the coalition. A standardized questionnaire was used, and questions were posed about (1) the self-evaluation of the coalition (is the local governance arrangement effective?), (2) the relationship between partners and actors involved in the coalition, and (3) the challenges the trend towards local governance poses to the government itself, its cultures, structures and processes. Data collected from the interviews were systematically analysed using data-matrices, in order to be able to draw some first conclusions on local governance arrangements (based on 5 cases), and more specific on the actors, their roles, and their relationship (politicians and civil servants e.g.). As we stated before, this study is preliminary and should be followed by more in-depth analysis, especially on the internal functioning, the roles key actors play and their interactions.

1 Inventory of local governance arrangements in Flemish cities

We identified 61 local governance arrangements in the Flemish cities. Before we present the results of our inventory, we have to make two preliminary comments. *Firstly*, we do not pretend to have a full view on all local governance arrangements in Flanders. We are pretty sure that there are more local governance arrangements ‘out there’, that were not detected by our radars. So, our list is exemplary, and not exhaustive. The fact that we identified 61 local governance arrangements enables us to make some general statements about the field of local governance arrangements in Flemish cities. Moreover, we think that our sample is to a certain extent representative, as we have examples from the 13 biggest cities in Flanders and Brussels, and (as we show hereafter) there is quite some variation on our key-variables. *Secondly*, for this inventory, we only dispose of very general information – per local governance arrangement – concerning the position of the arrangements on our three key-variables. Besides that, there are in some cases some ‘missing data’

about the key-variables. Still, our information enables us to cluster into groups of local governance arrangements in Flemish cities.

Cluster analysis I: policy themes

In the table below, we attempt to cluster the local governance arrangements per policy theme, as identified in the inventory. This proves not to be an easy task, because of the possibility that our clustering may be a little bit arbitrary: we choose to label the different policy themes ourselves (from the data that were collected inductively), and then to attribute these themes to the local governance arrangements. Still we believe our clustering has some validity, as initial clustering (done by the research team) was feedbacked to the cities (based on which some changes were made), resulting in the final table below. We discern between some general clusters (themes), as the table shows.

POLICY THEME	CASES
Care and welfare	17 cases, e.g. Ageing in Place Aalst, Special Arts Foundation St. Niklaas, InnovAge Leuven
Environment and ecology	13 cases, e.g. Collectif Open Source EauWaterZone, Pure Hubs 'Mechels Natuurlijk'
Neighbourhood development, public space and social cohesion	17 cases, e.g. PicNic the Streets Brussel, Neighbourhood committees Bruges
Economy	3 cases, e.g. Handmade in Brugge
Public administration & citizen participation	2 cases, Apps for Ghent & Antwerpen aan 't woord

Based on the clustering by policy theme, we can already draw some very general conclusions. *Firstly*, local governance arrangements emerge along the most diverse policy domains, ranging from care, over ecology and social cohesion, to economy and citizen participation. These are very broad clusters of policy themes however, and as such, we can discover some variety and heterogeneity within clusters. For example in the cluster of 'environment and ecology', we see local governance arrangements that deal with environmental issues like water, climate, sustainable energy, but also with issues like food and food safety (from a sustainability-perspective). Similarly, in the cluster 'neighbourhood development, public space and social cohesion' we see this diversity: local governance arrangements that deal with use of public space, but also societal cohesion, integration, poverty reduction etc. Secondly, we discovered that it is sometimes difficult to attribute a single policy theme (as defined by us) to a coalition, as there are examples of local governance arrangements that would fit more than one cluster. As a result, we may conclude that the whole idea of local governance arrangements does not fit with our traditional perceptions of clear and separate policy-silo's. Many cases approach societal issues and challenges from an integral perspective, assuming that a policy issue (like 'poverty' e.g.) has many dimensions that should be addressed simultaneously and in an integrated manner in order to combat poverty in an effective way: education, housing, finances, leisure, ... We observe indeed local governance arrangements (like 'Torekes' in Ghent²) that have attention for neighbourhoods, social cohesion, sustainability, poverty, and participation, which links the coalition to the administrative world of welfare policy, spatial planning policy and environmental policy e.g. In sum: local governance arrangements seem to redefine traditional policy fields and policy-silo's, which challenges (the working and structures of) local governmental bureaucracies which are still very much organized along classic separate policy fields with only little attention for integral and horizontal policy thinking.

Cluster analysis II: goals and aims of the local governance arrangements

² <http://www.torekes.be/>

A second manner to cluster local governance arrangements is to look at the goals they define, and the actions they perform to reach these goals. Perhaps this is an even more difficult exercise than the clustering around policy themes. Many local government arrangements seem to combine goals and actions, and do many things simultaneously. Also for this clustering, we asked feedback to the respondents in the cities, after which we finalized the clustering as in the table below. In general we can cluster them in two broader groups. Firstly a rather expressive role by which sets of actors try to influence policies and society (e.g. lobbying, protest, information-exchanges, raising awareness etc.). Secondly a rather service-delivering role by which they (help to) produce concrete and tangible services and/or products (Anheier 2005, Verschuere & De Corte 2013)

GOALS, ROLES, ACTIONS	CASES
Rather expressive role	
Raising awareness, lobbying & info-exchanges	20 cases, e.g. Casa del Mundo Aalst, Special Arts Foundation St. Niklaas, U-Turnhout, PicNic the Streets Brussel
Rather service delivering role	
Use of public space	6 cases, e.g. Plein Open Air Brussel
Innovation and creation	10 cases, e.g. Magnet Kortrijk, PureHubs Mechelen
Social cohesion and participation	10 cases, e.g. Apps for Ghent, Torekes Gent
Service delivery and cooperation	5 cases, e.g. Cohousing Waasland

The major observation is that many arrangements combine goals, thus it is difficult to position them in one cluster. Local governance arrangements thus are about several (and often complementary) goals and roles simultaneously. Many local governance arrangements seem to combine ‘expression’ and ‘service delivery’ (hence the table above is an over-simplification of reality – we put the cases in the cluster they fit ‘best’ in): a lot of local governance arrangements want to raise awareness, but they do it via the delivery of concrete products or services. For example: reallocation of public spaces is done in several ways at the same time in one arrangement: community gardening + renovation of houses + social restaurant. Other local governance arrangements focus on one concrete service they want to deliver in cooperation, e.g. sustainable energy (case Energent in Ghent). But most or even all service delivering cases have in common that they want to achieve some societal impact on important issues via concrete service delivery. The fact that most of them have heterogeneous goals is somewhat in line with our conclusion concerning policy themes: most arrangements reason and act in a horizontal and integral way, over policy domains, via different roles and actions simultaneously. They cannot be put in a well-defined, one-dimensional and homogeneous box.

Cluster analysis III: actors involved

The third and final way to cluster local governance arrangements is to look at the actors involved. This way to cluster leaves fewer degrees of freedom to the researcher. We discern between four types of actors: local government, government at other levels, commercial private initiatives, nonprofit private initiatives.

ACTOREN	CASES
Local government ³ + nonprofit actors ⁴	10 cases, e.g. Casa del Mundo Aalst, Fietseling Oostende
Local government + Government at other level ⁵ + nonprofit actors	7 cases, e.g. Torekes Gent, India House Leuven
Local government + nonprofit actors + private actors ⁶	11 cases, e.g. Ageing in Place Aalst, Apps for Ghent
Local government + government at other level + nonprofit actors + private actors	2 cases, Health for Growth Leuven, Duurzame Haven Antwerpen (sustainable port Antwerp)
Nonprofit actors + private actors	3 cases, e.g. Brussels Metropolitan

³ All kind of local government organisations (departments, agencies etc.)

⁴ Private actors characterized by the non-distribution constraint (associations in several domains, citizen groups, ...)

⁵ Governmental organisations that are not local (central government, regional government, supranational government, ...)

⁶ Private actors with commercial purposes (companies, firms, ...)

Only nonprofit actors	18 cases, e.g. PicNic the Streets Brussel, U-Turnhout
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In general terms, we can make a distinction between local governance arrangements in which one or more governmental actors are involved, and local governance arrangements in which no governmental actors are involved. Within the first category, we see that in all the cases in which another governmental level is represented, also the local government is involved. Within the second category we see that in all arrangements without any governmental representation, nonprofit actors are involved. Also, a lot of cases consist only of nonprofit private actors, while only in a few of them private commercial actors are represented. The observation that in half of the cases there is no representation of local governmental actors raises questions about 'local governance arrangements', as in these cases we cannot talk about government and private actors joining powers and resources in function of addressing societal issues and challenges. We are talking about private local governance arrangements here, in which government at most looks from a distance at what is happening there.

Conclusions of the inventory

Our attempt to define and systematize local governance arrangements leads to some very general first conclusions that pop up some relevant questions and issues, which may inspire for further research. The issue of local governance arrangements in Flemish cities today seems a very heterogeneous thing: variation in policy fields/theme's, goals and roles of local governance arrangements, actions they perform, and composition (actors) of the coalition.

Firstly, it is very difficult to attribute local governance arrangements to a single and homogeneous policy field, which forces us to stop thinking in terms of homogeneous and separate policy silo's (a way of thinking which is still dominant in many governments or governmental agencies). This observation has implications for the study of the phenomenon, but also for thinking about the organisation of government in times of increasing multi-actor governance.

Secondly, the picture becomes even more complicated if we consider that the formal legal competencies and the resources of local government, including politicians and civil servants, differ substantially from policy domain to policy domain. For example the degree of centralization or decentralization, and the institutional framework (national or regional laws) that determines the interdependency between public and private actors. In some policy domains in Flanders/Belgium, like social policy, there is much more centralization and a more balanced relationship between local governments and non-profit actors. In other policy domains local government and local politicians are nearly absent due to the marginal position of the local level (economic policy), while still in other domains (e.g. neighborhood development) local governments have much more freedom to act autonomously. Local governance arrangements should be studied and evaluated within the institutional framework of the country or region.

Thirdly, local governance arrangements are often very concrete and tangible: they emerge from one of more clear goals or challenges, and they develop concrete services and/or products to tackle the issue(s) in case. They develop a vision on one or more policy issues, and they have 'an opinion' about the issue. In that sense, local governance arrangements are often also ideological, in the sense that they want to make a difference concerning societal issues, that they want to have policy-impact. However, only a minority of the networks deals with policy making for really complex and wicked policy problems and for which the concept of policy network has been invented. A rather broad category deals with what we called 'expressive roles', bringing people together around small projects or actions that generate broad support in society, often being of an undisputed general interest. Other networks try to develop small scale types of alternative service delivery (see the concept of 'service delivery networks'). In a lot of networks with those types of goals, government

representatives do participate, but in a rather supportive role and the expectations towards local government are often rather restricted to those modest forms of practical support. But some networks are not restricted to one goal, they combine a set of goals (from the start on, or popping up during the process of cooperation). Then the position of local representatives can become more complex: supporting some goals while being more reluctant to other ones. The main conclusion here is that for a majority of the networks, there is no urgent need to develop active interactions with local government.

Fourthly, as we saw above, there is variation in the composition (the nature of the constituting actors) of local governance arrangements. Most often, at least in the cases we listed, local government and/or private nonprofit actors are involved. This means that local governance arrangements are in most cases a local story, working on local issues or at the local scale. Perhaps this is due to an attempt of local governance arrangements to deliberately operate at a small scale (attempting at transition and societal change in the neighbourhood, the village, the city). Related to this is the issue whether the networks are created bottom-up or top-down. Since we mainly focus on networks created by local actors, we leave aside the mandated top-down networks installed by the central government. But important is that also in those networks that originate in the local community, local politicians play certain roles, and often there are interactions between mandated and bottom-up networks. In some of our cases the arrangements have been created by the local government, as an instrument for implementation of local policies and in an attempt to use and combine resources of different public and private actors. Other cases originate by bottom-up private initiatives and in some of them local representatives are invited to participate. Those starting conditions lead of course to different role patterns.

Fifthly, when we describe concrete local governance arrangements by combining the three variables (theme, goals, composition), we observe that every arrangement is 'unique' (and fits into the meaning of the concept of 'arrangement'). Perhaps, what we call a local governance arrangement, is an organisational phenomenon for which we have no formal frameworks or templates (contrary to government agencies or formal associations which are established and determined by decrees and regulations, which also frame – at least partly – the functioning of these organisations). The hypothesis may be that most local governance arrangements 'invent themselves' in function of specific themes and challenges (which may come and go): an attempt to search for own goals, structures, culture, processes and procedures. At most there can be some institutional copying (for example between local governance arrangements in the same city, which have the same people on board e.g.), from front-running local governance arrangements, or cases that are perceived as best-practices. But then too, they need to invent their own 'modus operandi', fit or contingent to the specific context it operates in.

2 Preliminary results of the in – depth case studies

Following the inventory and the cluster analysis of the 61 local governance arrangements identified, we selected five of them for our case study. The case studies we conducted were exploratory, but still they inspire to think about issues that relate to the actors, their (changing) roles, and the (changing) relations between them in a context of new governance arrangements. We discuss these results on 2 levels:

(1) What is the position vis-à-vis the local government and its policies (given the observation from the inventory that there seems to be a lot of variation in actor-constellations, and the extent to which government is represented in the network)

(2) How can we conceptualize the 'structures' in which actors play their roles and meet (given the observation from the inventory that the uniqueness of every case perhaps urges for unique moduli operandi – structures and processes)?

Hybrid space: a construct beyond formal organizational structures

An interesting concept that could serve as a framework to order our findings and conclusions has been developed by Van der Steen et al. (2010): the 'hybrid space' in which representatives of government and representatives of private organizations meet or develop interactions. That could be a useful way to present some of the conclusions of our qualitative analysis: do the arrangements in the Flemish cities meet the features of those 'hybrid spaces' and how does that 'hybrid space' function?

In the hybrid space the intra-organizational rules and routines of government but also those of the private actors do not work solely, or the rules and routines of both worlds should be reconciled in a new manner, developing rules and routines more or better adapted to the hybrid space itself and to the demands of the new settings and relationships that develop in that space. The coalition takes over at a certain moment. The representatives not only represent or do not longer represent their mandating organization, but gradually their loyalty should develop towards the agenda of the arrangement, building up a more collective mandate. That means that although they could be mandated by their organization, that mandate should allow some flexibility and freedom. One constitutive element of the hybrid space therefore could be that it causes some frictions between the mandated organizations and the mandates representatives develop during the process in the coalition.

This definition of 'hybrid space' serves as an ideal typical construct of urban governance arrangements. The central topic is that representatives of cities function in a space where the hierarchy of the relations within the city administration does not function. In this ideal typical definition the basic relations are horizontal. In the following paragraphs we use this construct for some conclusions. We will see, in general, that most of our cases does not fit into that construct, so it could help us to better understand the great variety in our sample of cases.

Hybrid space: what type of institutionalization?

The concept of 'hybrid space' refers to interactions between representatives of different autonomous organizations. But where do those 'spaces' begin and how should we define them from an institutional viewpoint? This is crucial for everyone who wants to set up own inventories and it is important for the community of scholars: how do look at 'governance arrangements' before evaluating them?

The question here is: how is that hybrid space organized, how can we conceptualize this space, should there be some kind of institutionalization and what kind of institutionalization then? Does the concept refers to formal types of inter - organization (with working groups, steering groups, composition of board with representatives?). In our research at least we used, as a necessary starting point, some implicit criteria of a certain amount of inter – organizational formal structure as a feature of local governance arrangements in the Flemish cities. But it is possible, at least theoretically, that networks are only or more virtual than physical, based on a certain density of interpersonal relationships between politicians, public administrators and representatives of private actors. In that dense web of relations the communication is organized, although without formal features. The communication rests on a bargain between the actors to coordinate their actions, to set up a common project or to cooperate for common policy goals. For researchers it is very difficult

to have entries in that informal networking systems and especially to develop an in depth – view on the roles and actions of local politicians.

It is possible that representatives of government have no official seat in governance arrangements between private and non – profit actors, but that those arrangements have a formal structure that could be analyzed (using reports, internal documents, notes of meetings,...). Then there seems to be a clear physical demarcation between the government system and the coalition. But in the informal sphere there could be intense communication and an important influence of government representatives, so that in fact government is part of the network although not a formal member. It is also possible that representatives of government do participate formally in the coalition, but that their presence is merely passive and without having any significant impact on the functioning of the network. Being member does not mean automatically that actors are actively involved in the network.

Our research leads to at least three types of network settings that could be relevant to understand the roles of politicians and public administrators.

1. Arrangements in a formal structure (with or without judicial statute) with a certain formal institutionalization and where representatives of local government participate officially, mandated as the representatives of local government. The question is then who are those representatives: politicians and/or public administrators? In those cases their strategic behavior and the way they play some roles in the formal networking activities (meetings, working groups,...) can be observed and an evaluation of their impact is possible. The conclusion could be that their impact is absent, marginal, or influential and even dominating the network.
2. Arrangements in a formal structure but without formal participation of representatives of local government in the network. The question is then how do interactions develop and what is the effect of the networking on the private participants? Another question: are there any interactions with representatives of the local government? The answer could be negative: the network could deliberate choose to perform in an isolated way from government or the government does not want to become involved in those networks. If there are interactions, then the question is how do those interactions with politicians and public administrators outside the formal network structure impact upon the functioning of the network? It is possible that those interactions have only a marginal effect but it could be that the impact is substantial and that in fact the conclusion should be that local government is part of the network, although not represented officially in the network organization.
3. Arrangements in an informally institutionalized cluster of relations with no or with a light degree of formalization. The dominant informal character makes it even more difficult to reconstruct the impact and roles of politicians and administrators in the grey zone of informal networking behind the scenes.

The conclusion of our research is that, at least in the Flemish cities, the setting for elaborating and implementing urban policies is changing and that analyzing roles and behavior of local politicians and administrators has to be embedded in an analysis of those different settings. The nature of the urban governance arrangements does change and local governors have to work in a local community with a broader and more differentiated pattern of network settings.

The position of the coalition vis-à-vis the local government (and its policy)

The ideal – typical concept of ‘hybrid space’ is built on the assumption that there is a close and active relationship between the representatives of local government and those of private organizations. But our case analysis leads to a more ‘hybrid’ conclusion. There is a lot of variation concerning the position the arrangements take towards the dominant policy of the local government and this variable explains the nature of the space that brings them together or separates them. We asked key players in our cases on what criteria they evaluate themselves. In four of the five cases studied, criteria are based on a perception of distance towards government: they want to position themselves as supplementary to public services; they want to put transition ideas to the fore other than those on which actions of public authorities are based; or they want to influence the existing policy. For most of them, ‘government’ is something outside their coalition and does not belong to their ‘space’.

Concerning the relationship with local government, we could make the following classification, based on Young (2000), regarding the position towards the dominant policy patterns of the local government: adversarial, supplementary, complementary, and executive.

A minority of the networks in our analysis is adversarial to the local policies and in those networks, as we could expect, there is no participation of local representatives. Also the local governance arrangements with a more ‘supplementary’ focus (initiatives for groups or topics neglected by government, operating in a ‘niche’) take a more distant position towards local government. For those cases the concept of ‘meta – governance’ that is often used in this type of literature (see below) becomes more complicated: while meta – governance in the undisputed sphere of action for the general interest can be designed in a positive and supportive atmosphere, meta – governance by the local government in more adversarial contexts means the regulation of the public sphere so that political opposition can be freely and actively organized in networks. This helps us to remember that governance is more than an additional management tool: it confronts us with the power of government and the dominating local governance arrangements of parties and interests and it illustrates that governance can reinforce the existing power balances in our society or even can prevent the creation of adversarial networks.

In the cases dominated by a more complementary position (government and private actors working together for shared/common goals), the perception of key players in the arrangement is more based on dialogue and interaction with government which could give some indications of a more networked relationship. The complementary cases come closest to the concept of hybrid space and to the more horizontal relationships between public and private partners that is included in that concept. One of the five local governance arrangements under study has been installed by the local government itself. That is an executive network: although created by government, in the functioning of the network there is autonomy for the other participants. The Young-classification (complementary, supplementary, adversarial) does not fit this type of coalition that could be considered as an innovative executive instrument for policy implementation.

Our research leads us to a more differentiated although still intermediate conclusion. The relation between the adversarial networks and the local government seems to be rather antagonistic (in the sense used by Chantal Mouffe), although we do not know yet what is really going on behind the scenes. It is possible that there is more interaction than the official rhetoric suggests. In some arrangements, where the relation is more complementary, there seems to be an attitude of ‘living apart together’, with a rather passive role of the local government, supporting the networks from a distance. Some complementary arrangements would like to establish a more active interaction with the government and they hope to convince the representatives of the city to participate. In other cases local politicians and / or administrators play a more active role. And in some arrangements they take the lead, using this as an instrument for the implementation of their policies. In those cases they not only participate but also actively manage the network.

3 The role of politicians and public administrators: new lenses?

Three layers of relationships between politicians and public administrators

In this last paragraph, our focus is on the politico – administrative relations, although we have to admit that our research was rather elementary on that topic. However, our inventory and our case analysis is a useful first step towards a more elaborated analysis. It helps us to compare the Flemish or Belgian practices with the analysis of politico – administrative relations in other countries.

Most literature on politico-administrative relations, in the Weberian tradition of bureaucracy, focuses on their interactions within government administrations (e.g. Svava 2001). In the last two decades the focus of the research has been widened, introducing questions related to the impact of New Public Management on this relationship. Most NPM-literature deals with processes of creating agencies and privatization of service delivery, changing the balance of and introducing new questions about responsibilities and accountability. These two generations of research turn gradually into a third one: the roles of and interactions between (local) politicians and public administrators in settings of (urban) governance settings (e.g. Osborne 2006, 2010). Rather than being a totally new paradigm, the three generations of practices and research interact and understanding politico – administrative relations needs a layered analysis taking into account the interferences between the three approaches. Even if politicians and their administrators are active in a governance setting, their relation is at the same time influenced by the intra – organizational routines in bureaucracy and by the impact of new management practices. The reversed relation could also be hypothesized: how does the network setting impacts upon the interaction between both key players, thereby, eventually, also changing the traditions in the intra – organizational setting of the local government or impacting on the managerial relations?

The most important difference is that the organizational perspective changes from an internal view to an external one, from the focus on the intra – organizational relations to inter – organizational relations between representatives of local government and representatives of non – profit or profit organizations acting on their own behalf. Those organizations take part in the governance arrangements that have been created, be it formally or informally. They could also be in a certain way dependent on local government (financially or otherwise) but still they act in an autonomous way. The representatives of the local government have to interact with them in a more horizontal way, based on negotiations and bargaining. For those types of activities we use words as partnership, coproduction or collaborative, all words that refer to horizontal relationships in the cycle of policy making and/or policy implementation. The word leadership (covering both the roles of politicians and of public administrators) is well chosen to catch the specific context in which both political and managerial competencies have to develop in such inter - organizational settings. Leadership is an action-driven word , it is about convincing people to collaborate, bringing people together, combining ideas and resources, developing a common goal and managing processes. Those activities differ from giving hierarchical orders or the bargain that surrounds managerial output - oriented relations.

'New' local governance arrangements: implications for actors and their relationships

The literature dealing with the relationship in network settings, which we study here, could be summarized as follows:

- The paradigm-shift is presented as a new phenomenon and politicians should change their daily behavior and practices: traditional politics is over, enters new politics;

- In a normative stance, politicians should adopt the role of 'meta-governor': acting as the regulator of self-regulating settings of actors;
- The network settings, as the literature suggests, lead to role uncertainty and even marginalization of politicians: local government active in networks, mostly is represented by public officials and politicians (should) stay at a distance;
- A major problem is the accountability of networks, in the grey zone between traditional representative democracy and participatory democracy.

Paradigm shift?

The use of the concept of NEW public governance stresses that we are now entering a totally new era of political leadership. It is possible that this black and white scheme between old politics and new governance fits the real changes in some countries where collaboration between government and society really is a new pattern of policy making. But in a neo-corporatist country like Flanders/Belgium, '50 shades of grey' comes closer to the empirical reality. In Belgium there is a long and strong tradition of close collaboration between politicians and private organizations. Most politicians in the Belgian system have close personal links with and are often intensively interwoven with the non – profit and civil society organizations. No politicians in our system are only 'politicians'. In fact most of the traditional policy arrangements in the neo-corporatist subsystems of Belgian policy (like health care, social security, education etc.) could be labeled as collaborative governance 'avant la lettre', based on negotiated policy arrangements between government representatives and societal organizations. *Old* collaborative governance, if you want. If there is something *new* then, the novelties could refer to the changing nature of those existing arrangements: traditional organizations losing their grip and power, contested by new organizations seeing their entry in the arrangement blocked by vested interests. New could also be the rise of other networks set up by younger and different types of organizations and in new fields of policy or around new topics (social exclusion and cohesion, sustainable development, new energy policies etc.). New could also be the rise of more urban settings of collaboration while a lot of more traditional governance settings are part of central arrangements and central policy. And finally: new could be the bottom-up rise of collaborative arrangements replacing or complementing network settings created as instruments of policy implementation by governments. New in forms and appearances, but not new in their basic features and not new, at least for the Flemish / Belgian system, concerning the format of roles politicians play in that type of arrangements.

Meta-governance in context of new local governance arrangements?

The concept of meta-governor or meta-governance has become especially popular and is presented as a useful framework for a better understanding of the roles of politicians. In its broader meaning, the concept of meta –governance is about being reflexive to the different ways of coordination that governments can use to intervene in social life. Jessop (2003), one of the founding fathers of the concept, defines 'meta-governance' as re-articulating and 'collibrating' the different modes of governance and the balances between them: markets, hierarchy or networks. Within that umbrella concept he defines meta-exchange (regulation of markets), meta-organization (redesign of organizations, creating intermediate organizations, reordering inter-organizational relations) and meta-heterarchy (organization of the conditions of self-organization, with government at a distance). Our study focuses mainly on the second and partly on the third type of meta-governance: meta-organization and meta-heterarchy. Sorensen and Torfing in recent literature, define meta-governance as a set of two hands – off and two hands – on roles: designing and framing networks (hands – off) and participation in and management of the networks (hands – on). Including the roles of participant and certainly the role of manager however raises questions about the conceptual validity of meta – governance: if 'meta – governance' covers all possible roles, what is then the added value of the concept for a better understanding of the roles of politicians?

Our analysis shows that it is not possible to use the meta-governance concept in general terms: the position of the arrangements towards the local government is a crucial variable for a better understanding of the nature of the relationship. For complementary and supplementary networks the concept of meta-governance could be useful, although our conclusion was that in a lot of those cases there is no active relationship and it would be exaggerated to label an attitude of indifference as 'meta-governance'. The concept of meta-governance for arrangements that want to oppose the policies of local government enters the debate about organizing the public democratic space in the city. Meta-governance then could lead to strategies for eliminating adversarial arrangements. It helps us to conclude that if 'meta-governance' is used in an instrumental way, it could become even a dangerous concept for the democratic vitality of the urban scene and it could lead to a depoliticization of the debate on complex or wicked urban problems.

Marginalization of politicians?

Public administrators dominate the network settings, so the literature suggests, leaving politicians in an existential role crisis. "Another problem is that in many cases the politicians ... leave the lion's share of meta-governance to public administrators who function as liaison officers between the elected government and the self-regulating governance networks" (Sørensen and Torfing 2005b: 205). "When the framework is not set by local government itself, and where the aim is more deliberative than substantial, the political system tends to be more distanced, and high ranking administrative officers have a stronger role in the process of policy and resource framing" (Haveri et.al. 2009: 549). "On the one hand, representatives of local governments are seen to have difficulties in advancing the policies of their own organization in multi-level and multi-actor decision making contexts, which are often dominated by full-time working professionals and experts. On the other hand, collaborative bodies mainly consist of experts and administrators rather than politicians ... It is easy to understand why politicians are often in a weaker position in relation to the governance of collaboration than the municipal manager and other leading officials. They lack the skills as well as the time to use the tools that are considered to be most efficient" (Haveri et.al. 2009: 551). Politicians lack the necessary competences and those competences come closer to the profile of the public administrators. "To perform these important tasks, public metagovernors must possess a range of strategic and collaborative competences. The strategic competences include negotiated goal alignment, risk assessment, procedural flexibility, project management, and the ability to tackle unconventional problems. The collaborative competences include communication skills, storytelling capacities and talents for coaching, cooperation and trust building. The lists of strategic and collaborative competences can be further expanded, and some of the competences are also relevant for carrying out tasks other than those narrowly related to networks. However, the important thing to realize is that the meta - governance of governance networks brings some particular strategic and collaborative competences to the fore" (Sørensen and Torfing, 2009: 254).

We certainly need more evidence on the roles of politicians. As we stated earlier however: politicians in the Belgian or Flemish political traditions and culture always have been the spider in the web in the grey zone between government and private organizations. The context changes and the nature of arrangements transforms, that is for sure, but the basic set of political roles do not change. We have no empirical evidence at this moment that would lead us to the conclusion that the rise of governance arrangements leads to the fall of politicians. Our hypothesis would rather be that our politicians are very well equipped and prepared, historically and culturally, to play pivotal roles in the 'hybrid spaces'. That has also important effects on the way accountability is defined as a potential problem.

Accountability?

The active roles of politicians in governance networks, are additionally constrained and limited by the normative framework in the New Public Management discourse. They “*have become isolated at the top of the pyramid and lack detailed knowledge about the problems, challenges and policy options within the different policy areas. This makes it difficult for them to formulate the overall framework for more detailed network-based policy decisions. In short, politicians cannot do the ‘steering’ if they are not part of the ‘rowing’, but that conflicts then with the dominant NPM – paradigm*” (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005a: 215). NPM has left the elected politicians in what many perceived to be an ‘empty-handed’ position – ‘far away from things’ – and without any grasp of what was going on in the municipality (Hansen, 2005: 230) ... but it is hardly to be conceived of as a new role, detachable from ‘ordinary’ participation as co-governors in governance networks. To be guardians of democracy, elected politicians must be involved and partake in ‘everyday’ and substantive ‘first-order’ policy making – in co-governance with other participating and co-governing actors. (Hansen, 2005: 224). Here NPM and the accountability criteria meet and conflict: NPM brings about keeping distance and accountability means being active in the networks themselves. That means that accountability is also related to political culture: in political systems where it is not done or unusual for politicians to partake in networks, the accountability problem takes another shape and is defined otherwise than in systems where this participation is undisputed and even belongs to the political heritage.

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Annexes

List of the local governance arrangements in the inventory

4. Stad	Naam
Aalst	Casa del Mundo
	Plastiek Fabriek
	Jumelage Aalst-Gabrovo
	AIIPA – Ageing In Place Aalst (zorg proeftuinen)
Antwerpen	Transitie Deurne
	Antwerpen aan't woord
	Stadslab 2050
	Duurzame haven van Antwerpen
Brugge	Onder 1 dak
	Brugse Buurtcomités
	Zeebrugge Open
	Speelruimte-beleidsplan
Gent	Handmade in Brugge
	AppsforGhent
	Toreke(s)
	Meubelfabriek Brugse Poort

	EnerGent CVBA
	De Fiets van Troje
Kortrijk	Transitiestad Kortrijk
	Serrecomité Kortrijk
	De Magneet Kortrijk
	Intercultureel centrum Leiaarde Kortrijk
Oostende	Fietseling
Sint-Niklaas	Special Arts Foundation vzw
	Solied vzw
	Cohousing Waasland
	Zelfoogsttuin De Tronk Sint-Niklaas
	Klimopjegevel Sint-Niklaas
Turnhout	De Koep vzw
	U-Turnhout
	Turnhout trapt het af
	Peuterspeelpunten
	Kindvriendelijke stad
	Pestactieplan
Mechelen	Pure Hubs 'Mechels Natuurlijk'
	Startersacademie
	'Vzw Mest'
Leuven	Leuven Klimaatneutraal (LKN)
	InnovAge
	Centrum voor Kinderopvang
	Netwerk intrafamiliaal geweld
	Health for growth
	Creatieve coalitie aan de Vaartkom
	India House
	Netwerk Huis van het Kind
	Leuven Zuid
Brussel	Picknick The Streets
	Modal Shift (info: http://bralvzw.be/modal-shift)
	Masse Critique / Kritische Massa
	Plein Open Air
	Collectif Open Source / EauWaterZone - -> Staten-Generaal van Het Water
	Platform Kanal

Short description of the cases

De Koep

(<http://www.dekoep.be>)

De Koep is established as a civil movement in the summer of 2013. The goal was to create a platform that should support and strengthen civic engagement in the city of Turnhout, in the realm of the cultural year 2012 in that same city. An association was established which performs various goals, like advocacy for the preservation of a youth center (that was to be closed). In general, De Koep assembles people and associations of people that want to vitalize civic life in the city, by promoting and advocating for initiatives that strengthen social cohesion through community life, debate, cultural initiatives etc.

Duurzame Haven Antwerpen

(<http://www.duurzamehavenvanantwerpen.be>)

Since the economic crisis of 2008-09, the local governmental agency 'Port of Antwerp' decided, in cooperation with businesses and companies in the port, to develop a plan to strengthen the economic position of the port, and to introduce the topic of environmental sustainability in the economic activities that are deployed in the port. This plan is developed by public actors (like the local governmental agency) and private business actors (like the association of logistic companies in

the port, and the federation of chemical industry).

Staten Generaal van het Water Brussel / Etats Généraux de l'Eau à Bruxelles (EGEB)
(<http://www.egeb-sgwb.be/Home>)

The EGEB is a platform of civilians, associations, neighbourhood-committees and researchers from the Brussels Region, with the aim to make 'water' a political theme, and to put it on the policy agenda. They conceptualize water not only as a technological and economic issue, but also as something that lives, is part of the community, the city. They defend water as a common good with many functions. As such, they support and back-up, as a network, any initiative that contributes to this goal.

Solied
(<http://www.sameninburgeren.be/initiatieven/Samen-Inburgeren-Sint-Niklaas---SOLIED-vzw>)

Solied is an association in the city of Sint-Niklaas, and stands for 'solidarity' and 'sustainability'. It assembles some ideas and initiatives in an independent association, from the observation that the local government has (in their eyes) not sufficient attention for the issues the association cares for. Examples of initiatives are: LETS (exchange-system), co-housing initiatives, collective growing of vegetables, etc. The core of the association consists of people that are active in the associational life in the city of St. Niklaas, and people from the broader transition-movement. Their target groups are people in a vulnerable life-situation (poor, refugees, ...).

Energent
(<http://www.energent.be>)

Energent is a cooperation that works around the topic of sustainable energy (production and transportation and use). It started as a group of people caring for the transition towards a sustainable and climate-neutral society. They advocate for renewable energy production, energy-reduction and sustainable energy-production. More specific, they aim at being a partner in the market of energy production, by buying and selling shares in initiatives that produce energy in a sustainable manner: windmills, solar energy etc. For this purpose, they found a partner in the Province of East-Flanders and the City of Ghent, who both have the topic of sustainable energy on their policy agenda. As such, Energent operates in a political environment that is more or less supportive.